

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**THE WORKING PEOPLE OF LOWELL
LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
MARY BLEWETT/MARTHA MAYO**

**INFORMANT: EDWARD HUNTLEY
INTERVIEWER: JOAN WALSH
DATE: OCTOBER 27, 1985**

**J = JOAN
E = EDWARD**

Tape 85.21

J: Okay why don't you just say your name first.

E: My name is Edward Huntley.

J: Okay, and you lived in Lowell when?

E: I lived in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1930 to... from '30 to '36.

J: Yah. And when did your parents or grandparents come to this country?

E: My parents were born in this country, and my grandparents come from Canada, I don't know when I was.

J: But that was your maternal grandparents, Gauthier?

E: Paternal.

J: Your father's? Your mother's?

E: Maternal.

J: Yah, your mother's parents?

E: That's right, my, my...they were born in this country.

J: Okay and where did you live before you went to Lowell?

E: I lived in Lebanon, New Hampshire.

J: Okay, who else went to Lowell with you?

E: Niles Machine Company, I moved there when they moved from Lebanon to there in the old Walker. Walker Street, that's the street they were on.

J: Walker Street?

E: Walker Street!

J: They bought the...

E: They bought the Lamson Cash Register Company.

J: Cash carrier?

E: Cash carrier, yah.

J: Right, and what did the Niles Machine Company do?

E: They made street signs. Street ah, light...stop and go, stop signs.

J: Signals.

E: Signals, signals, and street signs mostly.

[Tape is turned off then on again]

J: Okay so you moved to Lowell with the Niles Company (E: That's right) of Lebanon New Hampshire?

E: That's right.

J: Okay, but did you have a family when you were in Lowell?

E: No, just I was married.

J: How long had you been married?

E: I was married in '29. I only lived there a year in Lebanon.

J: Okay, and then you and your young wife came to Lowell.

E: Yah.

J: Okay. Describe...can you tell me about um, where you lived in Lowell, your first house?

E: My first house I lived in Lowell was Gilbride Terrace. And that's between, near Branch Street.

J: And how long did you live there?

E: Oh I don't know. I lived there about a year I guess.

J: Ah huh. And what type of facilities did you have?

E: It was a, it was a block is what it was. It was like they'd call it a condominium today, but it was old fashion. It was old, row houses, like company houses, you know.

J: Oh I see, row houses, you mean like we had...

E: All in one piece, you know, only you had a piece and the next person.

J: Well like how many rooms did you have?

E: I had a four rooms.

J: Did you have your own bathroom in this house?

E: Yah.

J: You didn't have to share that?

E: No.

J: Kitchen facilities, and bedroom? (E: Yup) Okay. And where did you move after that?

E: I lived at...I forget the number, but it was on A Street.

J: Another house?

E: Yah, another house. That's off of Stevens.

J: Off of Stevens?

E: That is way up the end there off of Stevens, then I came back down.

J: Right, but on A street (E: On A Street) what type of living arrangements?

E: That was a regular two-family house [unclear].

J: And who were your landlords when you were there?

E: What were their names?

J: Well the name, or what were their nationality were they, or?

E: Oh.

J: You don't know? Is that...you told me about someone whose wife was expecting a baby? Were those the ones?

E: That's right. That was Gilbride Terrace.

J: Oh okay. was that your landlord?

E: No, that was just a friend of ours (J: Or a neighbor?) who lived next door in this house here, [unclear] living next door to me.

J: I see. And so what nationality were they? Do you know?

E: I don't know, I don't remember.

J: You don't know, but so they were having a baby and you were the one that was asked to.

E: Yah.

J: What happen?

E: I was going to take her to a hospital in Dracut, and on the way to Dracut I had a flat tire. And she was moaning, and he called for a taxi. The taxi came and got her, and when he got her to the hospital just in time. The baby was born just as she got in the hospital.

J: Oh what did she have?

E: Boy.

J: So that was when you first moved to Lowell in Gilbride?

E: That's right!

J: Okay. So after you left A Street, then you moved?

E: I moved in from, from there to 23 A Stevens Street.

J: What type of house was that?

E: That was two family, that they had made an apartment on the third floor. They called it 23A.

J: So who was your landlord there?

E: A couple of Jews that, they run a store.

J: Oh nearby?

E: On a, the long street there.

J: Middlesex.

E: Middlesex Street, half way down the.

J: What kind of a store did they have?

E: Furniture!

J: Do you know the name of it?

E: It is gone now. It's gone for years.

J: You don't remember what their name was?

E: I don't remember what it was, no.

J: So how many people lived in the whole house? There were three apartments or, in that house?

E: Yah.

J: 23 A, (E: Yah, yah, yah) and the landlord lived in there also?

E: That's right! Umhm.

J: Now you mentioned to me something about a little incident you had, when you, when your sink got blocked up.

E: Yes.

J: Can you tell me about that again?

E: Yah, one time my sink got blocked up. And we went to get, told the landlord about it, and she done everything that was down in that house, she was Jewish. And everything that was done in that house was down by a Jew. Everything, I don't care what it was, it was a Jew that fixed it.

J: Uh huh.

E: And then she have a remark that [unclear] use more grease then they did, and that's why it got blocked up.

J: So how did you like that?

E: Well I wasn't exactly...It didn't make any difference to me.

J: But you were mad you said?

E: Oh yah!

J: Did you say anything to her?

E: No, no.

J: No, she was the landlord.

E: She was the landlord.

J: Right. So how long did you live in that house? The longest of the others?

E: That's right. I moved from there, I moved from there to Lakeview.

J: Okay. So can you tell me what about the rest of the neighborhood. Was is a bad section or a good section?

E: No, no, it was, I would say in Lowell it was considered a good section.

J: That last house?

E: Yah.

J: Stevens Street?

E: Further down was where it was worse. [Unclear] downtown around there was...

J: Oh, can you describe downtown Lowell? That's one of the questions they want me to ask you. What was downtown Lowell like then?

E: Like any other city.

J: Well was it bad or good, dumpy, or?

E: Oh no, it was a good, they had good stores. And they had bum stores just like everywhere else.

J: What was the big store that you told me?

E: Bon Marche. (J: Uh huh) Bon Marche, (spells) B O N M A R C H E with a hyphen on the end of it there.

J: Yah, right, and ah.

E: Which is now I believe, it's either, it's one of the big stores in Boston now.

J: Oh, ah huh, so what about that thing you were telling me about the ethnic groups?

E: Oh.

J: There were a lot of...

E: There was alot of good coffee houses. And they'd sit there all day long, the older people, they'd pick this thick, thick coffee.

J: Like demitasse?

E: Yah, demitasse.

J: Or Espresso, or? And what was the other big ethnic group there?

E: French. Oh yah, French.

J: And so did they stick together like their own group?

E: Oh no, oh no, oh no, no!

J: I mean the French sort of...

E: They stayed with the French, and the Greek stayed with the Greeks.

J: And how did they get along?

E: They'd fight.

J: They had conflicts?

E: They had fights. They had conflicts here.

J: What kind of fights like would they have you say?

E: Just fights.

J: Did they? (E: Oh yah, sure) I mean did they have a lot of that?

E: Not as much as it is today. No way near as bad as it is today.

J: But they didn't click, they didn't get along?

E: No, they didn't click. They just kept amongst themselves.

J: Uh huh. Okay, what did a family do for entertainment in Lowell. I mean what kind of things were they to do in Lowell?

E: Well there was high school baseball (means football). That was the big thing there I think. It still is Thanksgiving Day between Lowell and Lawrence. That was the big thing.

J: Was that football you mean?

E: Yah.

J: So did you do any movie houses?

E: Oh yes, yah they had movie houses.

J: Umhm. Ah, let's see, so what was the prominent religion, predominant religion at that time Lowell would you say?

E: I'd say it was Greek.

J: The Greek Orthodox?

E: Orthodox yes!

J: Yah, but what about, okay.

E: There was a lot of Catholics too.

J: There was a lot of Catholics?

E: Oh yes.

J: You mentioned the church that you went to?

E: Yah, I went to St. Margaret's Church.

J: Umhm. (E: Yah) You were talking about the...

E: And my wife was taken seriously sick there, and she had a ruptured appendix and she was taken to St. John's Hospital. (J: Umhm) I remember the doctors. Now I remember the doctor, but I don't remember his name.

J: So how long was she in the hospital?

E: She was in the hospital about three or four weeks.

J: Oh.

E: Yah, she was in a long time!

J: Yah, that was St. John's?

E: That was at St. John's, yah.

J: Ah. So let's see. You mentioned as far as like the mill, you...

E: The Boott Mills?

J: Yah, your company moved down the Boston.

E: Boott Mills was one of those then...at one time Lowell was quite an industrial city, very much so. There were the E.H. Dutton Company they made machinery for all these mills. They were a big company. (J: Umhm) And then there was, of course it was all, it was all cotton in Lowell. Lawrence was all woolen.

J: And so the mills, were they all in operation when you were there, or were they?

E: They were going. They were on their way. They were partly, some were and some weren't, but they were going. They were on their way.

J: And so the financial picture wasn't to good in Lowell?

E: It wasn't to good. There was that, in fact Lowell at one time was very near bankruptcy where they would be Lowell, Fall River were taken over by the state as bankrupt. And ah , but they slowly worked their way out of it.

J: So a lot of the mills started closing. They couldn't make it?

E: That is right, they could work south, they moved South.

J: And what happened? You mentioned to me before about a lot of people, they were in trouble financially to?

E: Oh there was a lot of poor people there. It was a poor place, yah. My relatives lived in Springfield at that time, and food and stuff was almost half of what it was in Springfield price.

J: Oh in Lowell? It was half of this?

E: Almost half, yah.

J: Half the price of Springfield?

E: We used to buy, like you got for dinner, ham, I can remember buying that two pounds for a quarter.

J: Wow! [Unclear] (E: Yah) So when all the mills were in, a lot of them were in trouble, people were losing jobs?

E: Oh yes, absolutely,

J: And there were a lot of people who...?

E: That's what happened to the city, being so poor, because they couldn't pay their taxes and...

J: And what about the...? So a lot of the people had emotional troubles you said, because of what was going on. Didn't they commit suicide and stuff? I thought you told me about people who jumped off a building, it wasn't too unusual?

E: Oh no, that was when they used to dive off. That was the young kids that used to dive off those high mills into the canals.

J: Right, but didn't people take their own life? I thought you had told me it wasn't too uncommon?

E: It wasn't too uncommon no, no.

J: Because they were frantic of the situation, bankrupt?

E: They were just destitute!

J: So what did you like or not like about Lowell would you say?

E: Well everything was decayed, it was old. It was very old and it was, it looked like a town that was beaten. That's what it looked like. It looked like [unclear].

J: So were there some things you liked about it too?

E: Yes, they had nice parks. They had parks, but I mean they were runned, but they were, they were nice. My wife worked in a, one, there was one little woolen mill there, the rest was all cotton, (J: Oh yah) and she worked in there.

J: And what about your financial situation? Now you told me...

E: You just got by, that's all.

J: But you were able to buy a car then?

E: That's right.

J: [Unclear]

E: I bought a, I had a hot mobile. A hot mobile, that's an old car. They don't even make them anymore now.

J: But did you have that in Lowell?

E: No I bought that in Lebanon.

J: Oh before you came to Lowell.

E: Yah, that's right!

J: So that wasn't a new car?

E: But I bought a new Chevrolet in Lowell.

J: Oh, nineteen.

E: Thirty four.

J: That was a Chevrolet?

E: That's right. It had what they call, well I forget the name of it now, but something they tried, that they just [unclear], but it didn't work out.

J: So did the social life revolve?

E: Post Office Garage I bought it, sure. The Post Office was up there.

J: Oh. Did the social life revolve around like people in the churches they belonged to, or?

E: I would say so, yah!

J: Yah, so the ethnic groups?

E: Yah, that's right. That's right, oh yes.

J: Was there a lot of Jewish people in Lowell?

E: About an amount like any others. See most of the stores were run by Jews.

J: Umhm. So they were more well off than the other groups?

E: That's right, that's right, they were at that time, yah.

J: Ah, so it says, did you see much poverty in Lowell? But you said...

E: Pile of it, a lot of it.

J: Yah, and how about crime? Was their much crime in the city?

E: Not as near as much. You didn't get as near as much as you do now.

J: No huh, burglaries? I mean where people were so poor sometimes you see breaking in and all that? You don't remember that?

E: I don't remember anybody breaking in, no.

J: No huh. (E: No) How about like was it safe to walk out at night and stuff?

E: Sure it was. Sure, there was no, nobody worried about that.

J: No huh. So would you say that the people dressed well, or were they on the ragged side?

E: I would say that, I would say maybe medium.

J: But the ones that didn't have money, and the poor.

E: Well yes, there was a lot of drinking done there.

J: Oh their was!

E: It was during prohibition.

J: Yah.

E: And you'd see them in the alleys drunk, in the store fronts you know. But it was prohibition. They didn't have any liquor. It was what they called White Lightning, use to make it. Then beer, they use to brew beer, (J: Oh) yah, at home.

J: But you mean that was bootleg?

E: That's right.

J: Umhm. So did you make friends with any of the immigrants that were there, say people you know, that were first generation, I mean that had come over from other countries directly to Lowell. Their were a lot of immigrants right?

E: Oh God yes. I bet you over half of that place was immigrants, more than half, they came from across. They were brought over to work in the mills.

J: Did you make friends with any of them?

E: Jeese, I don't remember of any.

J: No? Like the neighbors that you had?

E: I probably did, but I don't remember.

J: How about in your company?

E: In my company? The whole company.

J: Did they hire some?

E: Huh?

J: Did they here any immigrants?

E: It came out in the paper that we were going to be a big company, that we were going to have over a hundred people working there, but they never got over fifteen or twenty.

J: Really!

E: No!

J: Why is that?

E: Because it didn't grow, thats all.

J: The company didn't do great?

E: Didn't do that good, and then finally out of business.

J: Oh yah, did you...you didn't stay with the company though that long?

E: I did. I was with that company, oh yes, in Lebanon there too?

J: Yah, but I mean when you left to come to Springfield the company was still operating?

E: Oh yes! It was on its last leg though.

J: Oh, umhm. They had a huge building you said.

E: Yah we had...Yah, they had, I told I was a Lampon Cash Carrier.

J: Yah, but I mean it was real big wasn't it?

E: They had a foundry that was...they had a foundry alone I would say was big as any mill in this, in this city. It was as big as...I would say as big as that [unclear]. It was a big, pretty as big as Westinghouse.

J: Yes, you mean that was the building where you worked?

E: No, but we took one of the buildings, but they were in that group. It belonged to Lampson Cash Carrier. They were a big company.

J: Oh, and they went out of business?

E: No they moved to Rochester New York, but I think they are out of business now, nobody uses any of them anymore.

J: No, what was it that they made? Can you describe that?

E: You put ah, you would go on there and you would buy something. And say it was fifty or seventy five cents, you would give her a dollar. She would take the dollar. She'd unscrew this thing and put it in there. She'd pull the handle and away it would go, way over to the office.

J: On a track or?

E: On a track yah. Some of them section, some of them were sections. Then they would, then they'd unscrew and then put the quarter in, and pull it, and it would come back with your change.

J: You would get your change yah! So did those department stores in downtown Lowell, did they use those at that time?

E: They used those at that time yah.

J: Why do you think that company left Lowell?

E: Because the mills were closing and everything. The mills were all loaded with those things too.

J: Oh, so business wasn't good for them?

E: Business was not good for them!

J: I see, yah! So was you... Well this kind of goes along with the other question, but was your general impression of Lowell good or bad?

E: I would say it was bad at that time.

J: What was the means of public transportation?

E: Had trolleys. (J: Uh huh) Yah, we had...

J: Where did they go? Near your house were you able to get a trolley?

E: Yah, you could go right up Middlesex Street, right up Stevens Street to come to Middlesex which is just a little ways from there, and you would get a trolley downtown right there, yes.

J: What kind of trolleys were those, electric or on track?

E: Yup, [unclear] a little wire with a track gear.

J: They were on track too,

E: Yah.

J: So how were they powered? I mean they were electric?

E: Electric, yah, the overhead wires.

J: Oh yah, yah. Did you ever go to Boston like when you lived there?

E: Oh yah, lots of times. About an hour ride to Boston.

J: And how did you get there?

E: I had my car!

J: Oh you didn't take public transportation?

E: No.

J: Okay, what would you like to see if you were to come back to Lowell?

E: I have no desire to go back to Lowell.

J: No?

E: I have no desire to go back to Lowell!

J: Wouldn't you like to see the National Park System that talks about the [unclear].

E: Yes, I'd like...I'd like to see... Yes, I'd like to see that.

J: Yah, how about, how about the canals? Were they used by people at that times?

E: At that time they were going out. They were [unclear], and not using them.

J: No?

E: Well that's what I say their were on their way out.

J: You mean even the canals?

E: Even the canals!

J: Well what had they been used for before that?

E: To run the power, the water power for these mills, little [unclear] mills.

J: How about transportation? Did anybody use them for boats to get places?

E: Never, I saw a boat on one of them.

J: Really!

E: In fact it was against the law to even go on one.

J: To go on the canal?

E: That's right!

J: Why is that?

E: Because they were dangerous, they were high.

J: What the canals you mean?

E: Yes, I mean the buildings were high and they use to jump into the canals.

J: Oh I see, that was recreation?

E: That was the kids recreation yah. Thats four or five stories high.

J: Yah, they could get hurt. Did people get hurt?

E: Oh sure, they'd used to be quite a few here.

J: Oh, and you had talked before about people jumping off buildings, I thought people did it to like if they were depressed about what was happening?

E: Oh not, nothing. No, not that I know of!

J: No!

E: No they were to, the newspaper was a courier citizen, and they had two newspaper the Courier Citizen and the Sun.

J: They still have the Lowell Sun

E: They do?

J: Yah, yah.

E: No kidding yah. The courier citizen isn't there?

J: I don't know, I haven't heard of that one, much around. Maybe they do.

E: And the Lowell Sun, yah!

J: What was the name of the church that you went to?

E: St. Margaret's.

J: And was that near you?

E: That was on Stevens Street.

J: So you could walk to that?

E: No it was quite a ways. Well it was maybe covered a couple of miles up there from where we lived.

J: Yah. How about the food in the area like restaurants, was that, besides the coffee houses like were they...?

E: Very, very cheap to eat in the restaurant!

J: Oh they were, huh. (E: Very cheap) What kind of food did you go for, regular, American?

E: Regular, American food.

J: Did they have like Greek restaurant too?

E: Yes, they had restaurants strictly Greek, yah and they had American.

J: Where were those little coffee houses that you talk about?

E: Any little empty store that the first thing you know, there'd be a coffee house.

J: So were they successful or?

E: Oh God yes.

J: Because they were cheap?

E: They were cheap, yah.

J: People were out of jobs, they hung out?

E: Out of jobs, that's right. Didn't have nothing else to do, and they'd stand there and congregate all day long and talked oh, better times you know. The city government was very hard up, very hard up.

[Tape turned off, then on again]

J: What did you used to do for recreation?

E: We used to go down into Pawtucket and [unclear], and go to a Lake, only I forgot the name of the lake, but that was Sunday recreation. My God they'd be loaded with people, boats, swimming, and all that stuff you know.

J: That was outside of Lowell?

E: That was outside of Lowell. It was in Pawtucket, yah.

J: And what did the people wear for bathing suits then?

E: I had a whole suit. I remember mine came to here.

J: Above your knee you mean?

E: Yah, and up to here, and the arm was open. All underneath here was all opened The sides, the whole side, both sides was open here.

J: On the top.

E: Yah.

J: And the bottom was all one piece?

E: Yup, one piece.

J: And the women had kind of long bathing suits?

E: That's right, yah.

J: Okay did you get together like with other people that you knew to go to the beach or?

E: Mostly the people that were in the shop came with us.

J: That you knew?

E: That we knew, yah came with us.

J: So there were other husbands and wives like that came too?

E: Oh yes! All of the factory came, yah.

J: And their families? So did they tend to stick together like, and then went around one another too?

E: That is right! That's right. We all lived, tried to live right close to each other.

J: So you had your own little group?

E: That's right, we had our own little group, yah.

J: So probably if you would of come by yourself you would have maybe gotten to know more of the immigrants?

E: That's right. That is right probably yah. As I said, this woman who was having their baby, I forget their name, but they lived right next door to us.

J: But they weren't from your company?

E: No, no they worked in a car shop in Billerica, which was the same as they were Springfield Car Shops. They used to make engines there and everything. That was one of the big industry when I was there. (J: [Unclear] They used to have a commuter train every morning use to leave Lowell, and take the [unclear] to work in Billerica.

J: How many days a week did you have to work?

E: It was just, it was five days.

J: Yah. So you were off?

E: No, we used to work till Saturday noon, most of it was Saturday noon.

J: And how about your grocery shopping? What kind of stores did they have for your food, where you went shopping?

E: Same as they are.

J: Little stores? I mean they didn't have big supermarkets?

E: No, no, there was no big....The first big supermarket I ever saw in my life was in Lowell, the name of it was the Giant Store. Did you ever hear of them?

J: Well I've heard...I think I've heard of Giant Store.

E: Yah, the Giant Store, that was the first big...Everybody thought that was something. My God that was always packed with people, but it didn't last. I mean after the novelty wore out...

J: Why didn't it last? I should think....

E: Oh the novelty wore out of it, they, didn't want to travel. People didn't have that much way of traveling.

J: It wasn't near your house?

E: No it wasn't near,

J: Can you think of anything else like about that you know, any conflict between the religious groups or the ethnic groups? Anything about the French?

E: We had parades. I know the Catholics did. (J: Oh!) Oh yah, the ah, St. Jean de Baptiste and they had....

J: The French.

E: Every, they have the most beautiful churches I was ever in in my life in Lowell. I mean every, every, every, Baptist, not the baptist, the French the Irish they all had beautiful churches.

J: So they all had their own though?

E: They all had their own.

J: So what was the Irish Church?

E: St. Margaret's.

J: Oh where you went?

E: Yah.

J: Oh, so that was mostly Irish people. And then the French?

E: The French was St. Jean de Baptiste.

J: So did they all have like...well they had their own parades to celebrate [unclear]?

E: Oh yes, carry around the statue like they do down the [unclear] street there, you know.

J: [Few words unclear]. How about Italians in Lowell, were there many?

E: I don't remember to much about Italians, but between Lowell and Lawrence they had a place called Merrimack Park. I think that is gone. That's one of those like Riverside Park. We used to go there quite a little. That was at the time they had the dance craze where you would dance till you fall down, and the last one up would win the prize.

J: So did you go to that?

E: Oh sure, we use to go. They used to charge you, I don't know, five or ten cents to go in and just watch them. Yah, and they'd sleep, one would hold the other one up while the other one would sleep, and they'd get on the floor sound asleep. And then they'd finally, they'd be only one couple left and they'd win.

J: Did you ever do it?

E: No.

J: It was a Marathon.

E: Marathon, Dance Marathon, yah.

J: How long would they go like?

E: Oh my God, sometimes they would go thirty days, twenty five, thirty days.

J: Really?

E: Oh sure.

J: Dancing continuously!

E: Yes, and one would feed the other. It was the damnest thing you ever saw.

J: And where was this?

E: This was at Merrimack Park, (J: Oh, they had a [unclear]) between Lowell and Lawrence.

J: So that was entertainment?

E: That was entertainment, yah.

J: And did you drive to that or walk?

E: Oh yah. I always had a car there.

J: How about the price of gas, how was that?

E: I don't remember [unclear]. Oh yes I do to. I remember I used to buy Gulf gas for fifteen cents a gallon.

J: And okay.

[Tape is turned off, then on again]

E: People used to go there. And a lot of people used to go there and sleep, just to get, for a night sleep.

J: In where?

E: In the jails. They'd put them in there and they'd search them, and they would take away knives and things like that, throw them, have them stay overnight. Then in the morning they'd let them go, because they had no place to sleep.

J: So their were alot of...

E: That's right. There was a lot of that. [Unclear]. Derilicks yah, poor, that's right.

J: So it wasn't like they were doing anything wrong.

E: No, no, they weren't their for crimes or anything.

J: They were just poor?

E: Just poor, no place to go.

J: So there were a lot of people that had no job.

E: There were a lot of people like that, yah.

J: When the mills closed. How about welfare? I mean was there welfare?

E: Welfare, three quarters, nine tenths of that city was on Welfare. That's what happened to the government. (J: Yah, they couldn't...) There were no jobs.

J: They couldn't supply them for them.

E: That's right!

J: Did they get free food? Did they stand in line?

E: I don't remember anything. I don't remember soup kitchens. Yes I remember soup kitchens. I remember they had soup kitchen that used to give away soup.

J: Yah, for people...anyone?

E: [Unclear].

J: Who operated those, churches or?,

E: State.

J: Oh they did? Okay. How about Market Street? What else about that can you remember?

E: Market Street was a very short street, very short. It goes from Merrimack to Central, to Central Street, and that was all little stores, and maybe half a dozen stores on there. It wasn't a very long street.

J: No. What other...what were the main shopping streets?

E: Oh Merrimack Street was the big street. Of course the Merrimack River went right through there, you know. And that was their big thing. Merrimack, Central, and Middlesex. Middlesex was the cheaper street.

J: Oh, what do you mean cheaper? Like rental, or?

E: That's right, you could buy anything cheap on Merrimack Street then you could on...not Merrimack Street, on Middlesex Street than you could on...

Side I ends
Side II begins

E: I bought a new Chevrolet at Post Office Garage it was, (J: Umhm) and I paid less than a thousand dollars brand new, brand new. And something else about it I can't quite remember.

J: You were talking about the gas in the car?

E: No, the front axle used to go like this, they had a knee action they called it, they called it first knee action car.

J: Knee like?

E: Knee, [spells] K-n-e-e, knee, see. Like the knee. (J: Oh I see) See. That was the first one. And actually it was the last one too, they didn't make it anymore. It didn't work out that way. They had a lot of trouble with it. We used to take a... There was quite a few parks here that you could go around, and they done the best they could with what they had.

J: So besides that one mill that you mentioned, the Dutton...

E: Boott, the Boott Mills. (J: Boott Mill) Yah, that was the big mill. That was really a big mill, but they used to call that, on the side of the river, that was the Merrimack River went right through there. You could start there in the middle of Lowell, and for a half of mile up that river it would be nothing but mills right side by side.

J: And you mentioned they call it the, what?

E: Mile of Mills!

J: Mile of Mills!

E: Mile of Mills.

[Tape is turned off and then on again]

J: Do you remember who the mayor was at that time?

E: Gee, I don't.

J: No? (E: No I don't) How about, did you vote while you were there?

E: Oh yes!

Unknown voice: Republican, Democrat?

J: Were you a democrat?

E: That's right. I was democrat there too! Yes.

J: Were there...what would you say? Were there mostly democrats?

E: It was a democratic city yah.

J: It was?

E: Yah, that's a, at the time the banks failed. Remember? I don't know if you ever heard of it.

J: Well you did mention it, yah!

E: My God there was one in every city was failing, and most every day. (J: Umhm) And Roosevelt was the one that stop that. Closed all the banks, every bank in the country was closed for oh about three or four days until they straighten it out.

J: Really?

E: Yah, every bank, and there wasn't a bank in the country open.

J: And what year was that?

E: I would say around 1936 or 35. 35, I'll say 35.

J: So what happened? Was there panic for the people?

E: Panic, it was, actually it was a panic yes, because people they get, somebody would spread a rumor that, that bank was in trouble, and oh Christ almighty, they'd be lines, they'd be lines a quarter of mile long for people to draw out what money they had. (J: Wow) It was something. I'm telling that was tough times.

J: They didn't want to leave their money in the banks?

E: That's right they wanted to get it out of there before it fails.

J: So some banks did fail?

E: Some banks did fail, yes!

J: Which banks did you go to? Do you remember?

E: Christ, I didn't go to any banks in those days. (Laughing)

J: You didn't have a checking account?

E: No, no!

J: You kept your money at home?

E: Well you know how much money I made?

J: No.

E: Eighteen dollars and twenty cents a week.

J: And how much was your rent? You mentioned that to me before?

E: Rents were twelve, fourteen dollars, somewhere around there.

J: Oh, I thought you said something like twenty three dollars a month, or no?

E: Oh that's another, that's one of the other places yah, yah, that was up on A Street.

J: Oh I see. And what about the last place you lived in?

E: Yah, well that was, as I say, was a converted third floor. I think it was fourteen or fifteen dollars a month.

J: A month?

E: A month, oh yah!

J: Oh wow!

E: Yah a month. Oh everything was by the month. There was nothing there by the week then. You could go up to the little store, little store on the side right on the corner of , of Middlesex and Branch, and... No, I mean Stevens and Branch, and you could buy a quart of milk there for a dime. That's what it was.

J: So there were nearly stores?

E: Oh they were nearby, neighborhood stores, yes. If you wanted to go downtown that was...nobody went downtown to do their food shopping, because it was to dam far. You had to got out on the trolley.

J: So now, and your wife earned some money also?

E: Yes, she earned, she worked in the Woolen Mills, and that failed too.

J: Oh while you were there?

E: Yup, that failed too, yah.

J: Then she was without a job.

E: That's right. Then I was without a job. (J: Oh) Not without a job, but a I was the only one working in the shop.

J: Really?

E: In our shop, yah.

J: Why? What happened to the others?

E: Just no business.

J: Oh, so they let go?

E: That's right, and they let go. And he, he thought he was...He was the superintendent of schools in Lebanon.

J: The man that owned your company, the Niles Company.

E: That owned the company, and he thought he was going to do a big business see. So he decided to get out of the school business and go into this thing, him and his brother.

J: What was his name?

E: Niles, (J: Oh, the same) Caleb, (spells) C A L E B, Caleb Niles and Arthur Niles.

J: Uh huh. He was a Yankee was he?

E: Yes, yes and they finally went...there was one time when I didn't get payed for two or three weeks.

J: Oh that must of been tough?

E: Oh Jesus, I'm telling you we used to go up to his house and he wouldn't even come to the door.

J: Oh!

E: Yah, he wouldn't even come to the door!

J: To give you money?

E: That's right. (J: He didn't have it.) But he knew what we wanted.

J: Did he have it?

E: No, he didn't have it. No, he was honest. There was no question about what he was honest.

J: So everybody was suffering?

E: Everybody was suffering!

J: So what did you do when you didn't have money for a few weeks?

E: You would go around and try to find a place to charge it.

J: Oh, you mean whatever you bought?

E: Yah, whatever you bought, you didn't need a hell of a lot. I remember turkeys were ten and fifteen cents a pound.

J: Did you eat a lot of turkey?

E: That and um, yes.

J: How about hamburg?

E: My God hamburg. I remember hamburg was two pounds for a quarter. On this...on this...on this Market Street you are talking about there was one meat market on the corner of Merrimack and Market. And ah, my God, they specialized in hamburg. I remember tons of it you would see in there, grinding all the time. People eat, and cheap hamburg too. I remember, as I remember it there was a lot of fat in it. Yah cheap, cheap food, cheap eating you know. Just enough to keep alive practically.

J: So if you were the only employee for awhile at Niles Company, when you left what did he hire on some more people?

E: No he went out of business.

J: Oh for a short while.

E: Well he moved to Lowell...he moved to Somerville. (J: Oh!) He moved to Somerville but didn't go there either. He sold it. He sold it to a company in Somerville, and now(--)

J: Did he go back to New Hampshire himself?

E: No, no, no, he went to...his home was in Lynn. (J: Oh!) And they came from Lynn, but he went up to New Hampshire to be the superintendent of schools.

J: But he didn't go back there?

E: He didn't go back there. He went somewhere up in Maine as I remember it. And the other brother I don't know where he went.

J: How about like, was there a problem? Well these people that didn't work, I mean was there a lot of drinking in Lowell?

E: There was a pile of drinking. There was a pile of drinking. Cheap, cheap booze. There was a lot of people, people would be in hospitals from cheap booze.

J: Were they like alcoholics?

E: Yes they were alcoholics, sure they were.

J: See all those things, you know, when times are tough (E: That's right) you know.

E: [Unclear] it was only about five miles from your friend lives.

J: Sandy?

E: Sandy, (J: In Andover) that's right. That's right, yes, Andover.

J: Oh yah, not far at all!

E: Not far at all!

J: So it wasn't a place that you were anxious to move right along?

E: No, no I was very glad to leave.

J: Ya you went there because of work? And when the work (--)

E: I went there because the company went there see.

J: And when the work didn't pan out?

E: It didn't pan out, I got out of there. (J: And it wasn't...you didn't go with them?) and even when I came here (J: To Springfield) it was a month or so before I had a job, but I was selling insurance, but I did finally get one.

J: Were there a lot of children around?

E: Oh yes, oh yes.

J: Like in your neighborhood? People still had big families?

E: Oh yes, they still had big families.

J: Even though times were tough?

E: That's right, nothing else to do (laughing). They had...you know where Lowell Textile? Where now it's, what is it now, Lowell, that college in Lowell?

J: Oh you mean the University of Lowell?

E: University of Lowell, that use to be Lowell Textiles. They taught textile, all they taught were Textiles.

J: Oh!

E: Because that was all woolen mills and on that street, that was a nice street.

J: You mean like Wilder or?

E: It was a little, just a little bit out of town, not...

J: Oh that's where the old , probably the North Campus of Lowell is.

E: Probably yah!

J: And it was um, oh I forget the name of the street myself now. But you had to go over the bridge?

E: That's right yah, yah. Yah, but that was a nice, at that time that was a fairly nice street for there. Thank God the streets were [unclear]. They needed repair, all of the streets you know.

J: Were they dirt, or were they blacked top like or?

E: Ah, I think that one was blacked top, but most of them were dirt.

J: So they didn't get much of that done.

E: No. No, it was. They didn't have no money to pay for it, you know.

[Tape turned off then on again]

E: For fighting, I would say the Greeks were the one, they were predominant. The French were too poor. The Greeks had money. They had a little money.

J: They did? (E: Yah) How come?

E: I don't know whether they brought it over or... You know Greeks, some of those people lived cheaper than others. They seemed to be get along better, amongst themselves, but they didn't mix with the French at all and they were right next together.

J: Oh, they had a certain neighborhood area?

E: That's right. That's right. Yah.

J: What was their area? I mean did they have a certain area that you could call the Grecians?

E: Upper Merrimack Street, upper Merrimack Street.

J: And how about the French what was their predominant area?

E: Right beside of them.

J: Is that near, like say what church would they have?

E: St. Jean de Baptiste, that was their big church. My God that was a big church I remember, yes.

J: Is there another one also St. Jeanne D'Arc?

E: Yes, yes their was one. There was, yup, umhm. And right near there was that big store, that Bon Marche. I remember that in particular, because that was a big department store, cheap you know.

J: Oh it was?

E: Oh it was a good store, but everything was cheap. Nobody had any money .

J: Wow. So if they wanted to business they had to be cheap. They couldn't have been making to much money the stores huh?

E: No, God no, oh it was closing all the time.

J: Did that close?

E: Half of the street sometimes they would be boarded up to go to these stores. Things were hard boy.

J: Ya I guess! So the social life had to be mostly free type things.

E: That's right, that's right. Yah, free type. Well I used to go to wrestling. (J: Oh) I used to go to wrestling.

J: Where was that?

E: That was in the auditorium, in the Lowell Auditorium. I wonder if that is still there. That must be there because that was a new building.

J: What kind of ... it was a civic center like?

E: It was like a civic center, yah, it was a stone building I remember.

J: Where was that located?

E: Right downtown, right downtown,

J: And they had wrestling matches?

E: Yes, they had wrestling matches there every week. And that was Christ, what did it cost you about twenty five, thirty cents to go to it.

J: Were their big name people that came there?

E: Yes, Strangular Louis yes, strangular Louis I remember him in particular. [Laughing]

J: Who else was there?

E: Gee. I don't remember their names.

J: Did they have local ones?

E: Oh [unclear]. He was the one that invented that where he would run and butt you in the middle with his head and knock you cold.

J: Oh! Now did mostly men go the wrestling matches?

E: Ya it was mostly men. (J: Women didn't go for it?) There were some women yah, but it was mostly men.

J: But did you go with people you knew like at work?

E: I went with a guy upstairs on A street. Now I forget their name, but they owned the house. I used to go with him.

J: Was he a Yankee?

E: Their was alot of Portuguese there too.

J: Oh there were?

E: Yah, there was quite of few Portuguese there too. On A Street around there it was all Portuguese.

J: When you lived there did you you get to know any of them or?

E: Not well enough to know who they were, their names and stuff, you know.

J: But what about the Yankees, what you called Yankees, that [unclear]?

E: Their wasn't that many. (J: No?) There wasn't that many.

J: How did they think about you? What did they think about you people that came in like Yankees?

E: Never heard them say anything.

J: No, did they ignore you,or mix in?

E: No, they were friendly enough, but ah, I remember the people across the street, were well off. Her husband was the manager of a Waldorf Restaurant. And they closed the restaurant and then they were poor. They couldn't get another job.

J: And what nationality were they?

E: I don't remember. I don't remember, but they were english speaking.

[Tape is turned off, then on again]

J: How did it feel then to be in a town where the industry controls the town?

E: Well when the mills were running full, they practically owned the town, and you bought in their grocery stores. Even in, even in [unclear] it was like that, you had to buy the [unclear] in their stores, you had to live in their houses.

J: So you didn't really have, they didn't have that much freedom?

E: You didn't have that much freedom in those days, no you used to, they used to bring the people over for [unclear] you know. They had contract and you had to do it. You had to live in their place, you couldn't move out. They were slaves actually, it was some thing like slavery.

J: So did you see some of that when you first went to Lowell?

E: Oh yes, I saw some of that, yes.

J: So they really didn't have that much freedom?

E: And they were old houses. My God, the old brick, great big brick houses, the long ones. Like Chicopee Falls used to be, remember? Do you remember Chicopee Falls? Like that you know

J: Umhm. So they really, they didn't have much...

E: They had nothing.

J: So, but they come over then.

E: Most of them came over most of them came over. Her father came, was one of them. He landed in Lawrence.

J: But when they were brought over for jobs, then in a few years later the jobs weren't there?

E: That's right. That's right. They moved to, down South. They didn't take nobody with them either. They didn't worry about you in those days.

J: No, the mill owners?

E: There was no unions. There were no unions, no.

J: Well who were the mill owners? Were they Yankees like?

E: Oh yes, yes. Yah.

J: They were concerned with themselves.

E: That's right. They weren't concerned with the people, no.

J: So they had to live close to their work too?

E: That's right, (J: the people) they had to kind of walk most of them, yah.

J: Yah, I mean they had the mill owned housing.

E: I remember the big mill there was the Wood Worsted Mill. Wood was the President of the American Woolen Company. He finally committed suicide.

J: Oh he did, because of why?

E: Because of hard times, and couldn't get any work. And it's the same old story. I mean they were importing it from across cheaper than they could make it here. He jumped off one of his mills.

J: He did?

E: He jumped off, yah.

J: And he died?

E: He died!

J: That's Wood?

E: Wood, (spells) W O O D.

J: So his company, that was the end?

E: No that wasn't the end of his company. No, because they had an American Woolen Company practically in every town in New Hampshire, and Vermont. In Lebanon they had two of them. [Name unclear] and the Riverside Mills, yes.

J: But this one was in Lowell!

E: This was in Lowell, yah. Lowell was the headquarters of the woolen mill in this country.

J: You mean the cotton wasn't it?

E: Cotton, yah, I mean cotton, yah. But I'm talking now about Lawrence which was wool. They were, they made more woolen clothes than any body in this country at one time.

J: So was there a lot of competition between the Lawrence people and Lowell?

E: Oh that was their big competition in every thing, Lowell, Lawrence, in sports and everything.

J: Okay. Well maybe someday you can go back to Lowell. That would be nice?

E: Jeese, I think I went back once.

J: [Comment unclear].

E: Yah, yah, back once.

J: How long after you had lived there?

E: Oh my God it was, before I met Lillian.

J: Well that was 1940?

E: Yay, around there, yah.

J: That was only about five years after you left?

E: That's right. It was about five years after I left.

J: And how were things then when you returned?

E: It wasn't any better. There wasn't that much improvement.

J: Umhm. Okay.

E: Oh, I remember the roads. Instead of being [unclear] or concrete, they were all these square, blocks of granite, and they'd set them in a row, you're seen them.

J: Like cobblestone?

E: Cobblestone yah! Yah, the streets were all cobblestone, the main streets.

J: And how was that for the car?

E: Oh Jesus! You'd shake in the car going up or down, oh yah! [Laughs] Of course the cars weren't that good either then as they are now either. Every body...When I had a Hot Mobile everybody thought I was rich.

J: Really?

E: Oh sure!

J: Who was that made by?

E: Hot Mobile, automobile. Do you remember the hot mobile do yah? [People in background answer no]

[Tape is turned off, then on again]

E: In the Woolen Mills at twelve years old, at twelve years old. That's where child labor, actually child labor started there. I mean that's where this fuss started over it

J: They left school, the kids?

E: They never even went half of them.

J: Oh, and how about women?

E: Women too. Women too. They used let...women used to work all night. They made laws that they couldn't do that.

J: When did they make the laws? About that time, or later.

E: About that time. About that time, maybe a little later, yah.

J: There were a lot of women huh.

E: Oh there were a lot of...a lot women working there.

J: Long hours!

E: Long hours and small pay.

J: So not too much education?

E: Very little education.

J: Well the medical services, you mention the hospitals. Now what were the other hospitals that you had?

E: There was Lowell General. There was St. John's. That's the only two hospitals I remember.

J: What about St. Joseph's?

E: St. Joseph's, yah, that's right, but I think that was a part of St. John's. (J: Oh) I think that was an affiliate of it.

J: Your company, did you have any medical like insurance?

E: We had nothing, no.

J: No benefits?

E: No benefits whatsoever.

J: How about the cotton mills? Did those employees [unclear]?

E: There was no unions whatsoever.

J: So there were no employee...?

E: There was no union at all.

J: No employee benefits?

E: They done as they please the owners did.

J: So I wondered did these people feel like they were better off when they came over here? I mean, or were they ...

E: They were still better off than they were over there.

J: Oh they were, in other countries, you mean in Europe.

E: In the old country, yah. They were still better off.

J: So they got even less pay would you say, than you?

E: They had alot of babies. They were [unclear]. They had a lot of babies, illegitimate.

J: Now would you say they got, they didn't get paid as well as you did?

E: I didn't get a hell of a lot either.

J: No, I no, but you're saying they got people that worked in the cotton mills. I mean they didn't get very good treatment?

E: No, no they used to get three or four dollars a week. [Repeats] Three or four dollars a week. [Unclear].

J: But they had their housing already?

E: Their housing was included, yah, (J: And they didn't have [unclear]) and they had to buy their food in the company store. So they wound up with a couple of bucks of their own. I'm telling you boy, that was... I think everything between Fall River, and Lowell, and Lawrence, would be the worse places I ever saw.

J: You think so?

E: Yes I do. I think they were the worse standard of living that I ever saw.

J: When you come to Springfield better than?

E: Oh my God yes!

J: Well you said the prices were higher here.

E: Prices were a lot higher here too.

J: Okay thank you.

[Tape turned off, then on again]

J: Did you ever go into any of the coffee houses?

E: No I never went in, because I didn't like the coffee anyway to begin with. And then they were all Greeks in there and they didn't speak English. They were all speaking their own language, and they were perfectly safe enough to go in, but I didn't care for that.

J: So they didn't make you feel that you were welcomed.

E: Oh no, oh no. They didn't make me feel I wasn't welcomed.

J: There was none other of your friends or anything?

E: That's right, but none of my gang never went in there.

J: Umhm.

[Tape is turned off, then on again]

E: None of the Greeks socialized with us.

J: Yah, what about....

E: I mean the Jews.

J: The Jewish? You mean the Jewish. So this Jewish family that lived, did they have children, in whose house, the one whose house you lived in?

E: Yah. Yah, they had a girl I think it was.

J: Yah.

E: I think a girl and a boy.

J: Did they ask you into the house?

E: No, she asked just to show us the decorations.

J: Was it their holiday time?

E: Yah, it was Christmastime.

J: But that's Hannukah for them.

E: Yah, Hannukah, yah.

J: So what did they...how many places did they have set at the table?

E: Oh they had four or five places set at the table. There was one that didn't have nothing there, but a chair and everything. And I had to ask her, I said, "Who's sitting here?" She said, "That's for the Lord when he comes."

J: Oh, it's Jesus, yah. (E: Jesus) Yah. So did they invite you in for like no cocktails, or any of that?

E: Oh no. Oh no, we didn't socialize with them.

J: No. (E: No) So did they have money?

E: Yes, they had money.

J: Oh. One of the other things that you mentioned...one of the other things that you mentioned about the owners of the mill, (E: Yah) now do they have money? The ones that were still going, the mills that were still going strong?

E: They had money, sure. They moved down south. Sure. I don't know what happened to them after that.

J: And they had cars you said.

E: Oh cars, yes. They had nice cars. They used to drive up to the mill there in a [unclear]. The other poor people are walking you know, [the gates].

J: What kind of cars did they have you say?

E: Oh I don't remember. I don't remember.

J: Oh, but they were...

E: They weren't cheap cars. They were good cars.

J: Umhm. So I don't think the mill people liked that too much.

E: Well!

J: They must not have thought there was...

E: We had the same thing [unclear]. We bought, came in with our [tin cans], a little box of tacks on them [unclear] in the road. [Laughs] Yah, they got more flat tires.

J: So they resented the bosses with the money.

E: That was during the strike.

J: Oh. Well that was some time later. You're talking about here.

E: I was talking about here, yah.

J: But there, even in Lowell, I mean they resented the bosses with all the money?

E: Oh sure they did, yah. The bosses didn't even hardly speak to the help.

J: Uh huh, oh they didn't.

E: No they didn't. They had foremen under them, see. And the foremen [unclear]. (E: I see) And then a foremen had an assistant foremen, and they handed it down like in command, see. Down to the...

J: Was this in Lowell too?

E: Yah, oh yah! All the mills, even the mills in Lebanon. (J: Umhm) Yup.

J: Okay, I think that covers it.

E: Okay!

Interview ends
jw